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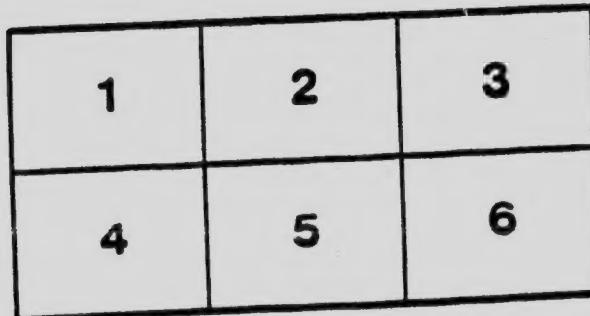
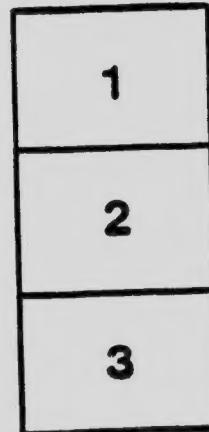
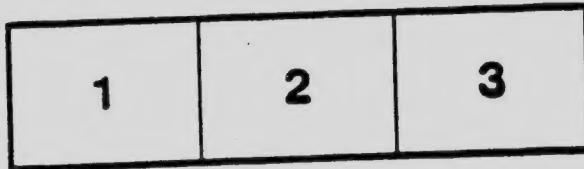
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The Winter Bird's Paradise at "Pleasant View"

By
R. A. MARRISON

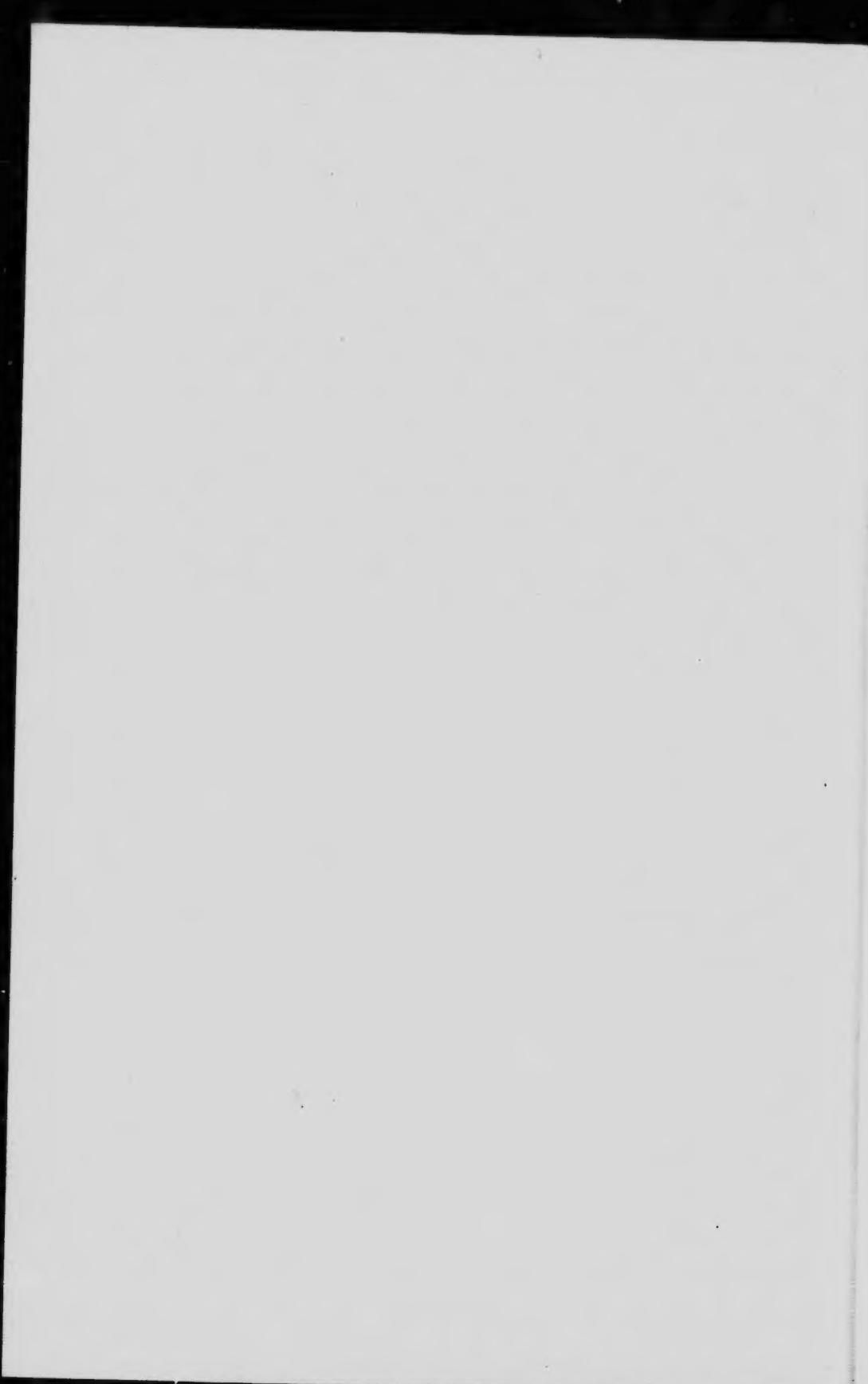
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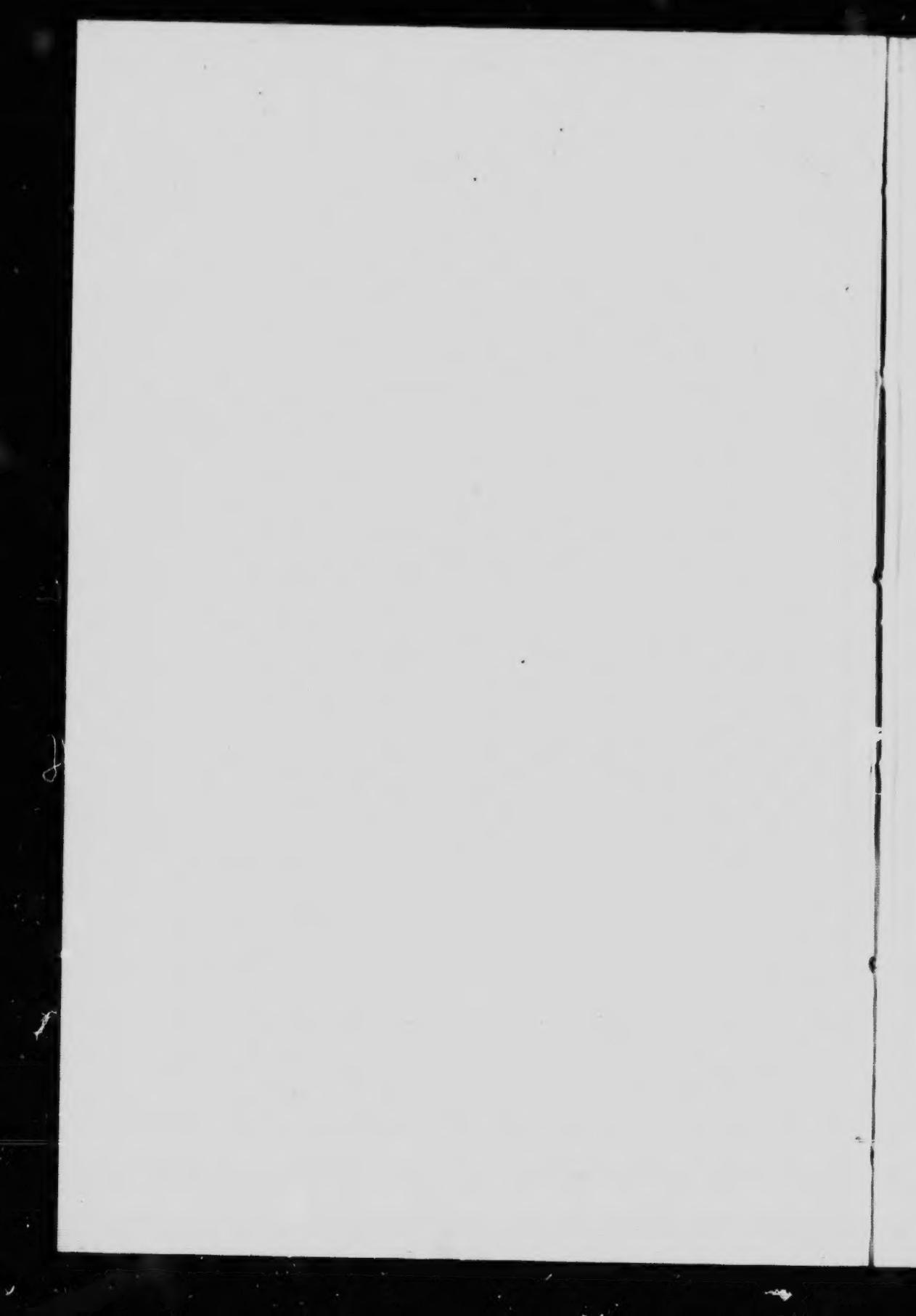
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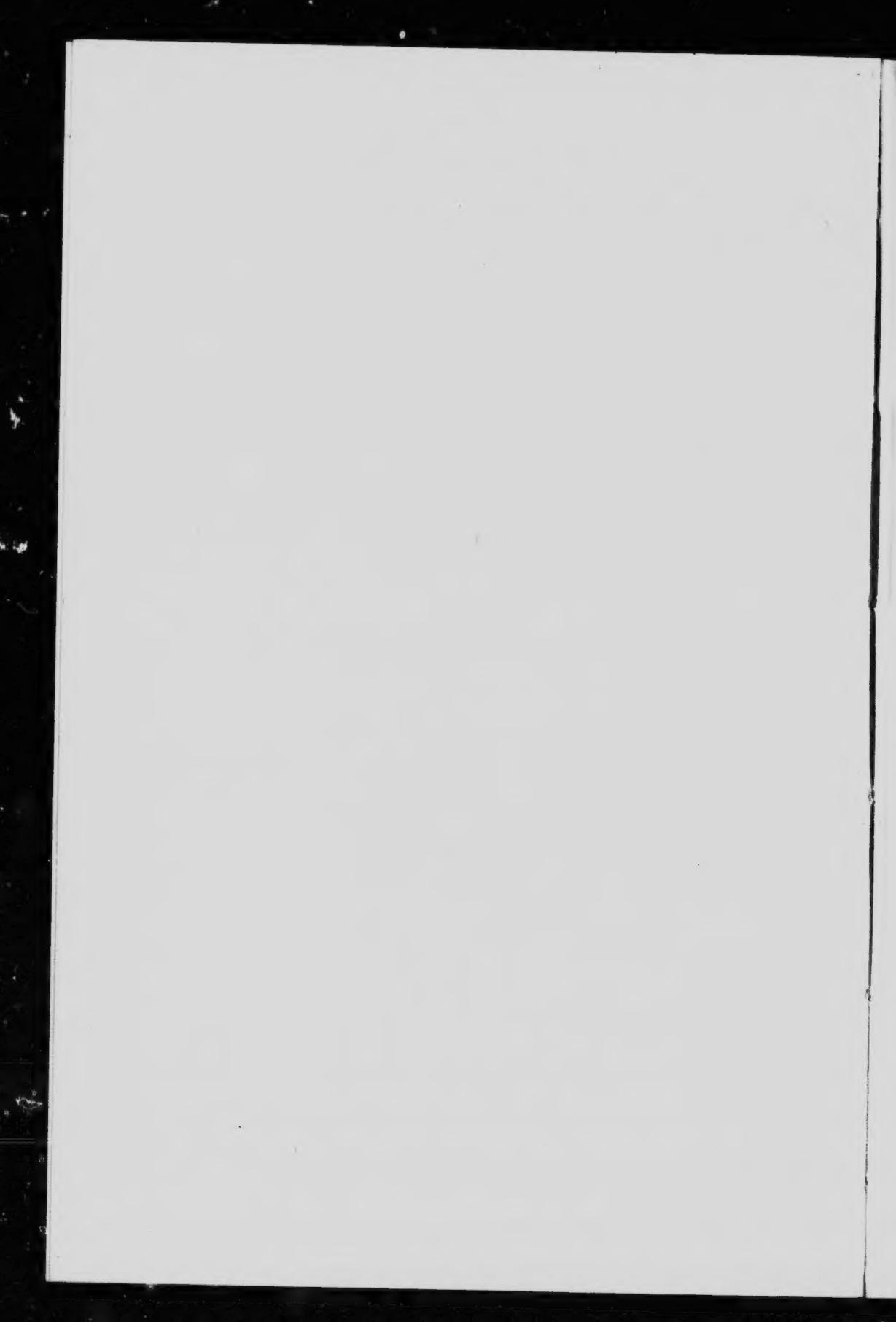
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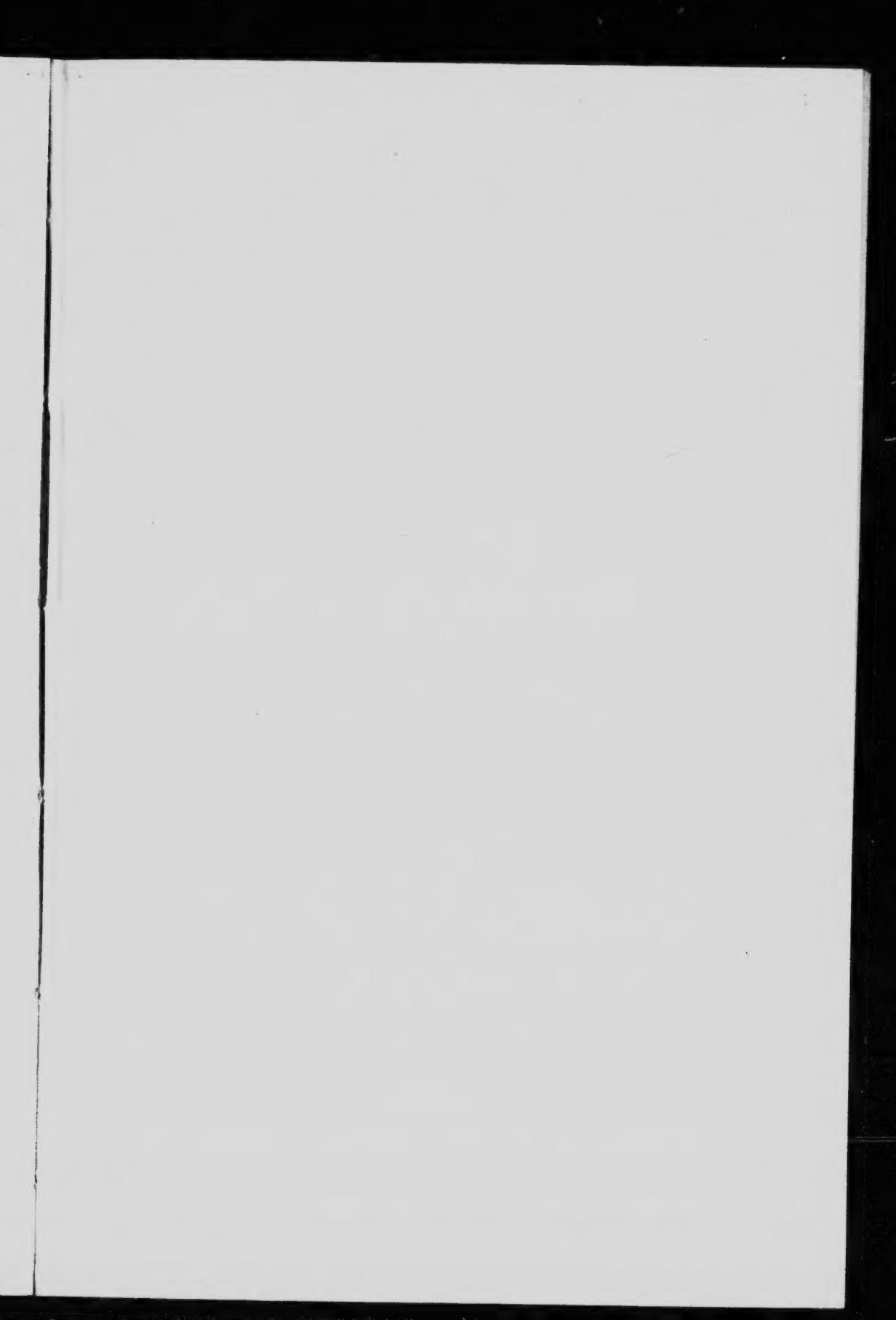
R. A. Morrison



THE WINTER BIRD'S PARADISE
AT "PLEASANT VIEW"

By R. A. MARRISON







The Winter Bird's Paradise at "Pleasant View." Side entrance to R. A. Garrison's home, Catarqui, Ontario, Canada.

The Winter Bird's Paradise at "Pleasant View"

By R. A. MARRISON

*Illustrated with Photos
taken by the Author*

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THE WINTER BIRD'S PARADISE AT "PLEASANT VIEW"

If you will listen awhile I shall gladly tell you about my winter birds. The first that came to me, early last fall, were a family of four chickadees (the American black-cap titmouse). With them they brought their usual companions, a pair of grannies (the white-breasted nuthatch). They came first in September, and before they learned to love and to trust me they fed on a cluster of red helianthus that grew in the bee-yard. Before the seeds were all gone, I nailed, about five feet from the ground, a small wooden feed-tray the size of one's hand, to the branch of a tree. Then one foot from the tray I suspended by a string a piece of lamb's fat or suet. After the helianthus seeds had disappeared, the little birds ate with evident enjoyment their share of Rolo's, my pet parrot's, sunflower seeds, which I put in their tray three times a day. As the fat was there all the time they were never disappointed if they grew hungry and went looking for food between meals.

Now I shall tell you what great pets my little feathered friends are. But before I begin I should like to say that I have always given

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names to all the pets I have ever kept, except snakes and mud-turtles. These never seemed to know when I talked to them.

Soon I noted that there were not two of the chicks exactly alike. As a result I named them "Ned," "Dee-de," "Nell," and "Dell." But here I must explain that I alone know their individual names, for they each, or all, come to me when I call, "Chick-a-dee-de-de, chick-a-dee-de-de"

In my pockets I have always carried sunflower seeds, because they often come to me without being called, and doubtless they would be greatly disappointed if they should find that I had nothing to offer them. But strange as it may seem, though I have good reason to believe that they were all reared in the same nest, are so unsociable that never more than one at a time will eat out of the food tray or from my hand. Even if more than one came to me for food, they always light on my head or shoulders and go to my hand singly. And they are not afraid of me; no more afraid than domestic pets would be. They climb all over me and take sunflower seeds from my lips and moustache.

Ned wears extra trimmings on his outfit, quite distinct from his sister's attire. A wreath of long, fuzzy, down-like feathers he sports on either side of his breast, and this reaches round

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and covers part of his wings. He seldom goes out of hearing, and will usually come when I call. Dee-de, too, is a dear little thing. Sometimes she is near me and I do not know it. Then she will light on a branch above my head and "cheep" and twitter away till I look up and spy her; or else she will flutter down on my head and gleefully chirp, "Dee-de-de." And sometimes when I have offered her seed she will perch on my hand, cock her head on one side, look up into my face and "Chick-a-dee-dee-de" she trills in delight. Then there is Nell — "Silent Nell" I call her, so shy is she and so seldom does she talk to me. But in reality she is just as tame as the others. Her great reserve makes her seem more gentle than any of them.

Last of all my pets comes Dell. And here I must ask your sympathy, while I tell you of the tragedy that happened to this sweet pet of mine. An extremely jealous little thing she was, much more so than either of her two sisters. The first time I noticed this trait of hers was when she flew to me one day and perched on my head while I was standing a few feet from the food tray. She held a seed in her mouth. Just then a stranger, a chickadee, lit on the tray. No sooner had Dell seen it than off she flew to chase it, screaming, "Trickle-trickle-trickle!" And that is always a chickadee's cry when it is angry. Having chased

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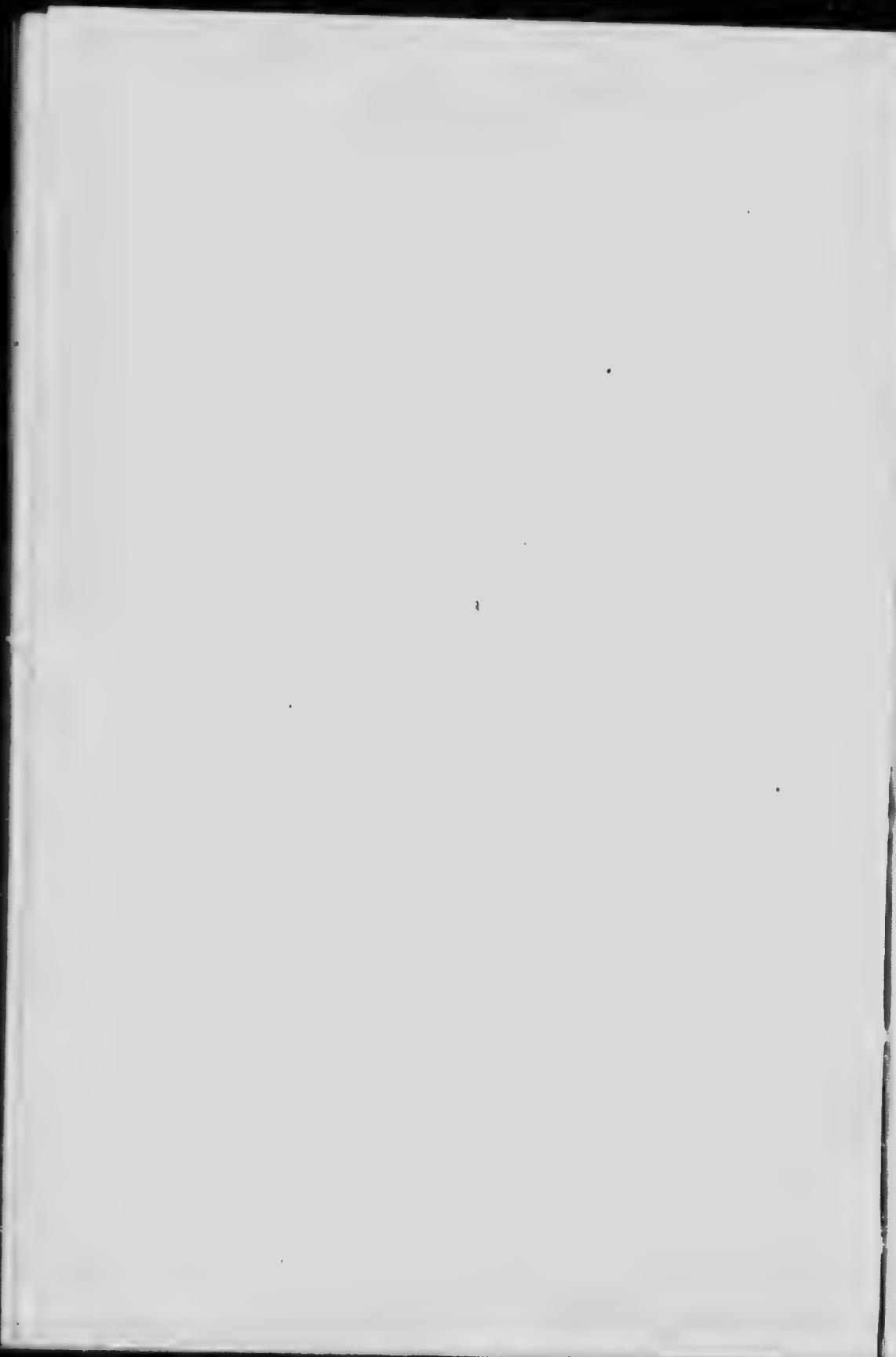
that stranger out of the yard, back to my hand flew Miss Dell, still holding the seed in her mouth. You wonder how she could carry it while making such a fuss, but carry it she did! Back again came that seeming robber, and a second time was chased by Dell, who returned once more with the seed still in her bill. And two days later, towards evening, the same incident occurred. I was standing about the same place, with Dell perched in my hand, when the strange chick lit on the tree just above the feeder. Then my little pet, without taking time to pick up a seed, flew raging after it, exactly as she had done two days before.

And here I wish to explain what I mean by a "strange" chickadee. It is one that belongs to another family; one that has strayed away from its own associates and is never kindly treated when it first tries to become acquainted with another family. If, however, it persists, it is soon accepted.

But to go back to Dell—she chased the intruder through a hedge of mulberry trees out of the yard. And now I must relate the sorrowful part of this tale. When poor little Dell returned to my hand I found that one of her legs had been broken above the knee joint. For quite a while she sat there, and then she picked up a seed and flew with it to a small branch of a near-by tree. How pitiful it was



Paradise Feeder, with birds eating and drinking from it. The lower one is a Chickadee leaving with sunflower seed in its bill. Next above, a Downey Woodpecker; opposite it a Nuthatch, both eating from the mesh wire hopper. Above them a Chickadee drinking. Perched on the branch above, another "chick" waiting its turn.



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to see her standing there, holding the seed with her one strong foot and trying to break it with her beak! The result was unsatisfactory and she, perforce, had to drop the seed. She left the yard and flew to some tall evergreens which grew near by. There she probably roosted that night, enduring great pain.

The next morning she came and lit on my hand. Just a little ball of fluff she seemed, with her feathers all ruffled. After a while she picked up a seed, then dropped it again and flew away. So I got some butternuts and cracked them, breaking the meat up fine, and rolled some hemp seed also for her. All this seemed to please the other birds who, of course, did not know that they were doing very wrong to jostle little Dell, and they did not give her a fair chance to get her share of the food. I could have caught her and kept her in confinement, but fear of hurting the little pet prevented my doing so.

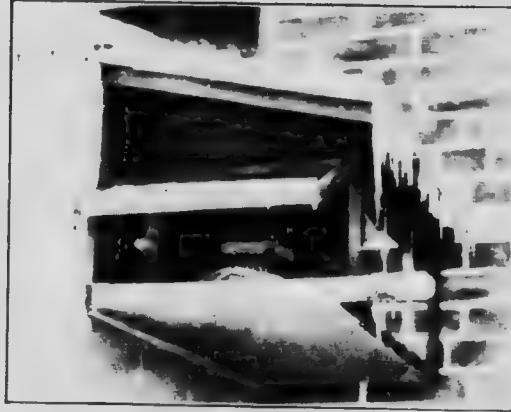
That was the last time I saw Dell. I think "Pete," the only one left of four pet cats I had kept three years ago, got her. I firmly believe that I could have taught that cat to do no harm to a pet mouse, if I had been keeping one, but he ate many, very many of my bird friends. Last summer he destroyed all my pretty little brownies, the wrens. And so a day or two after I missed little Dell I placed Master Peter in a

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cotton sugar bag and handed him over to our good baker-man, who faithfully supplies us with the "staff of life." He promised to show great kindness to Pete, and to put him in the store-room, where he kept his flour, and where rats and mice abounded. But I shall never keep a cat again so long as there are birds around my home, that I swear!

To return to my story. The grannies, or nuthatches, are also very great pets. Until recently I had supposed they were life-long friends of the chickadees, but now, from close observation, I have learned that they are neither kind friends nor very bitter enemies. Certainly they are greedy, selfish little mortals, who are constantly eating or hiding the chicks' surplus store of food. They are such sharp-eyed little snookers that they almost always find the meats of sunflower seeds, or anything else the chicks hide, whether they see the food hidden or not. On the other hand, when "grannie" hides anything in a nick in the coarse bark of a tree, or in any other hole, she always covers it with small pieces of bark or lichen.

These two nuthatches are good friends of mine, so of course they also have suitable names given them. Grandma and Grandpa I call them. Their names are consistent with their traits, for they seem to act like a pair of



The Crystal Palace feed house.



Little Blind Nell.



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old people, especially when handling their food. Grandma will light on my hand and say "Nook-nook," pick up a sunflower seed and mumble it in her bill to test its quality. If it should be empty she throws it away to one side, sometimes to a distance of three or four feet. But if she thinks it is of fair quality she deliberately places it in the identical spot in which she found it. Sometimes she will continue this process till she has overhauled as many as thirteen seeds. Then when satisfied that she has selected the best and plumpest one, she flies away with it to a tree, where she pokes it in a nick in the bark, always with the small end inward. She next splits open the shell by striking it a few blows with her sharp bill. This done she will either eat the kernel or hide it away for future use. But Grandpa handles the food question differently than his mate. He seldom tests a seed, and is so very careless in handling them that he frequently drops the seed he is inspecting without the slightest regard for the waste. Not so, however, with his faithful little mate. If she accidentally drops a good seed she will fly to the ground to pick it up.

A few days after I began to pet the chickadees and nuthatches there came a male downey woodpecker, and soon after a female. These birds usually come together, and having taken

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it for granted that they were both members of a family of four or five, I thought, of course, that the others would come soon. But if there were any others, they failed to show up. I am delighted to tell you, however, that those two little birds, the smallest and most beautiful of the woodpecker family, are still with me, and I have not the slightest doubt but that they will stay with me through all the long, cold winter months. I named them Downey Boy and Downey Girl. They feed on fat (suet) and Brazil nuts. These birds are so tame that they will allow me to approach them while eating, until I have touched them with my face. I can also reach out my hand and lift the bird and its food, which hangs by a string from the branch of a tree.

The last, but by no means the least, especially where size is concerned, of my feathered friends who are now my regular visitors, is a magnificent hairy woodpecker, a male bird. His name is Jim. Sometimes I call him "Hairy Jim," so many long, hairy feathers he has on either side of his breast. He is a very dignified fellow, extremely canny about his food. It is amusing to watch him eating a Brazil nut that is nailed to the trunk of the feeder tree. He, like Grandmother Nuthatch, is careful not to waste any good food. When eating the nut, of course he al-

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ways has to cling to the tree trunk below it. But if a crumb of the meat should become detached, in order to keep it from falling he swells out his great fluffy breast and fits it around the stem. Then he throws back his head into such a position that he is able to eat the crumbs that have lodged on his breast. I do wish this selfish fellow would bring his mate, if he is so fortunate as to have one. And would it not be a sight to behold if he could be persuaded to bring all his brothers and sisters as the chickadees do?

Sometimes I should like to have a snapshot of "Jim" when he is busy eating, especially when a chickadee comes and lights on the opposite side of that new funnel-shaped mesh-wire fat feeder. Does Jim fly after the chick? No, he just reaches for it, but by the time Jim's long bill and big head, which is about the size of a whole chickadee, arrives, "chick" is never there.

NOTES

During the month of November, before the snow came, I moved the birds from the bee-yard, which adjoins the front lawn, and which is only separated from the front and side grounds by two rows of trees, to a new paradise

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that I had prepared for them in the neighborhood of the side door of my dwelling. Their feeder is now suspended from the branch of a small tree which stands about six feet from the window. From this window the birds can be seen while they are feeding. I also made a Crystal Palace for them. To this pleasant retreat they go for food during very stormy weather. This combination food and dwelling house is attached to the outside of the storm porch, where the birds can be seen and fed without having to go out-of-doors. A hinged window opens from the inside of the porch to the palace.

A chickadee is a very small bird, next in size, perhaps, to our ruby-throated humming bird. Its color markings are very clear. They are black, white, drab and fawn color. This little bird seems to be man's most natural friend. By this I mean that he has more confidence in man than any other wild bird, or even than any other wild creature. The "chicks" sometimes come and light on me, with no other motive than pure friendliness. As a proof of this there are times when they will refuse to take food of any kind from my hand, but will only sit there looking up at me trustingly, then fly away. I know that I could induce them to follow me into the house. That, however, would be an unwise thing to do, as



Grandpa Nuthatch visiting his dead mate.



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they might grow frightened, and in flying against the window be injured.

It is not generally known that the chickadee is a songster. It is, nevertheless, and to me its notes are as sweet as any strain sounded by living creatures, or on any musical instrument. There are only two notes to its song, two words which are



These notes seldom vary, either in pitch or harmony. I might also add that those harmonious tones can be compared only to the sweetest strains produced by a violin. They can be heard for a distance of over fifty yards—a great volume of sound for a bird that weighs only half an ounce! Besides its chickadee talk there are also quite a number of other twitterings in its language.

The nuthatch is one size larger than the chickadee. Its markings are black, white, blue, drab and carmine. This little creature lacks some of the loving confidence of its cousin, the chickadee. But, like it, it is also very tame and beautiful. It does not pretend to sing, but for a small bird it has a very loud call, especially when away some distance from home, when it calls, "Cock-cock-cock, cock-

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cock-cock." At home, around the Paradise, coaxing for food, it says, "Nook-nook." If disturbed by any other bird wanting a share of its food, it spreads out its wings and tail feathers, fluffs up its body in order to look three times its natural size, and cries, "Ah-ah-ah." Thus trying, harmlessly enough, to imitate "German frightfulness."

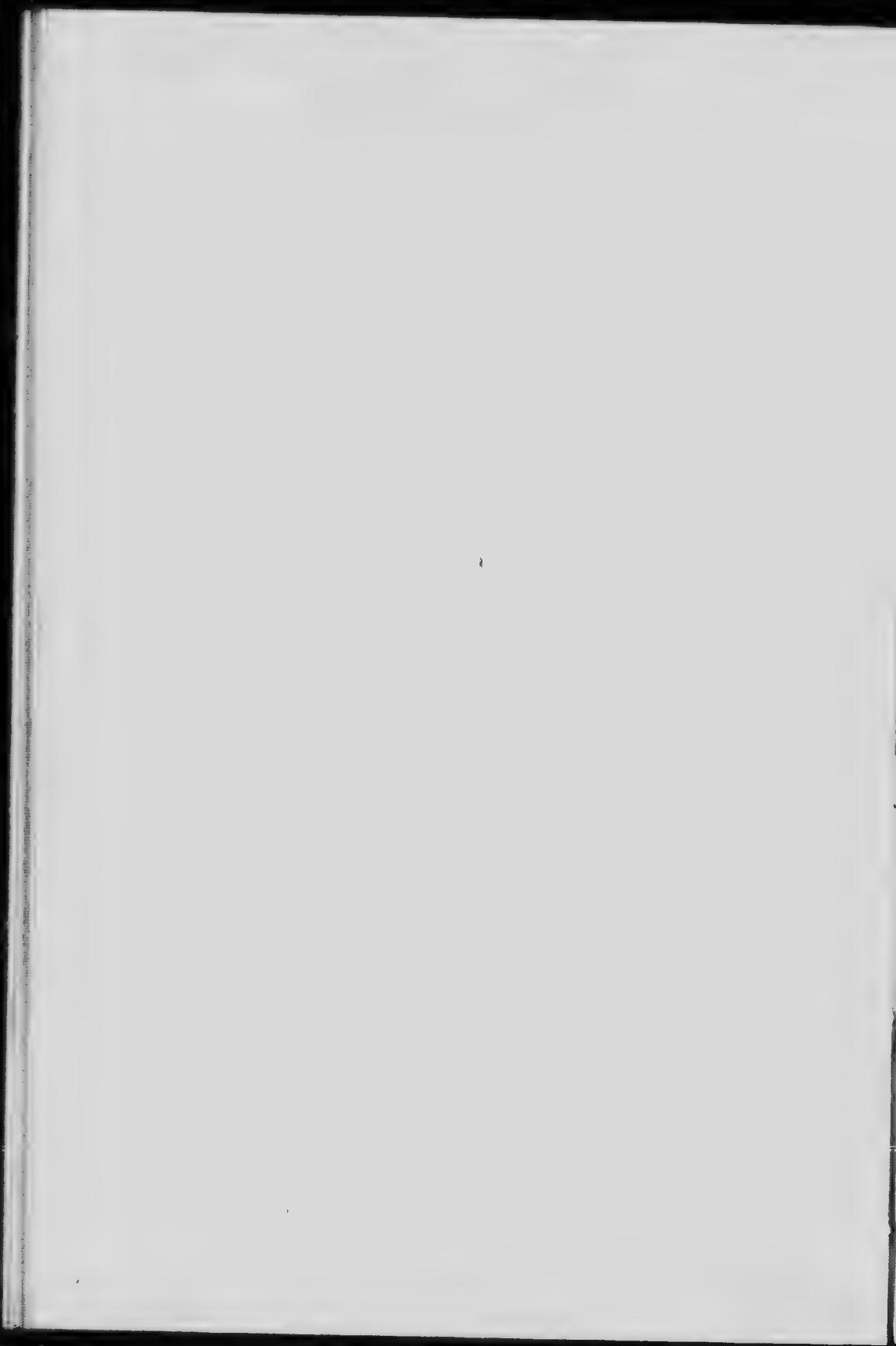
The downey woodpecker, first cousin of the nuthatch, is a little larger than "Grannie." The male bird is marked with black, white and grey, with a small spot of crimson near the top of its head toward the back. The female is marked about the same, only the red spot is lacking.

The hairy woodpecker, "the king of our balcony jungle," is a very much larger bird than "Downey." He is very nearly as large as our big summer woodpecker, the high-holder or flicker (yellow hammer). Its color and markings are practically the same as the "downies," with one exception—he sports two crimson spots on his head.

All the woodpeckers seem to be fond of the sweet, oily kernel of the sunflower seed, as are the "chicks" and "grannies." But they have not yet learned the knack of breaking open the shell. To make up for this deficiency in mechanical skill, they have a questionable habit, if honesty counts for anything in birddom, of



Grandpa making a second visit to his mate.



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stealing all they can find of the seed kernels which the other birds have hidden away for future use. Woodpeckers and nuthatches, especially the latter, are certainly the most expert climbers in all creation, not even our nimble squirrels excepted. Every day, through storm or sunshine, those industrious birds may be seen searching every nick and small hole in the coarse bark of all the large trees in the vicinity of their paradise in quest of private stores, sometimes throwing off quite large pieces of dead bark in their anxiety to find hidden treasure.

Besides feeding them fat (suet) and seeds, I also crack butternuts and black walnuts, and after picking out the kernels, I break them into small pieces and mix them with sunflower and hempseed. None of the birds will eat raw cereals, but they will take a limited quantity of bread and butter. No doubt they take the bread for the sake of the butter, and so, lest the salt in the latter might not be good for them, instead of spreading it over the surface, I rub a small quantity of the butter well in. When offering them Brazil nuts I first cut a hole in one side, then nail the nut to the feeder tree, where they can pick the meat out when they need it. All the birds have now learned to eat these nuts.

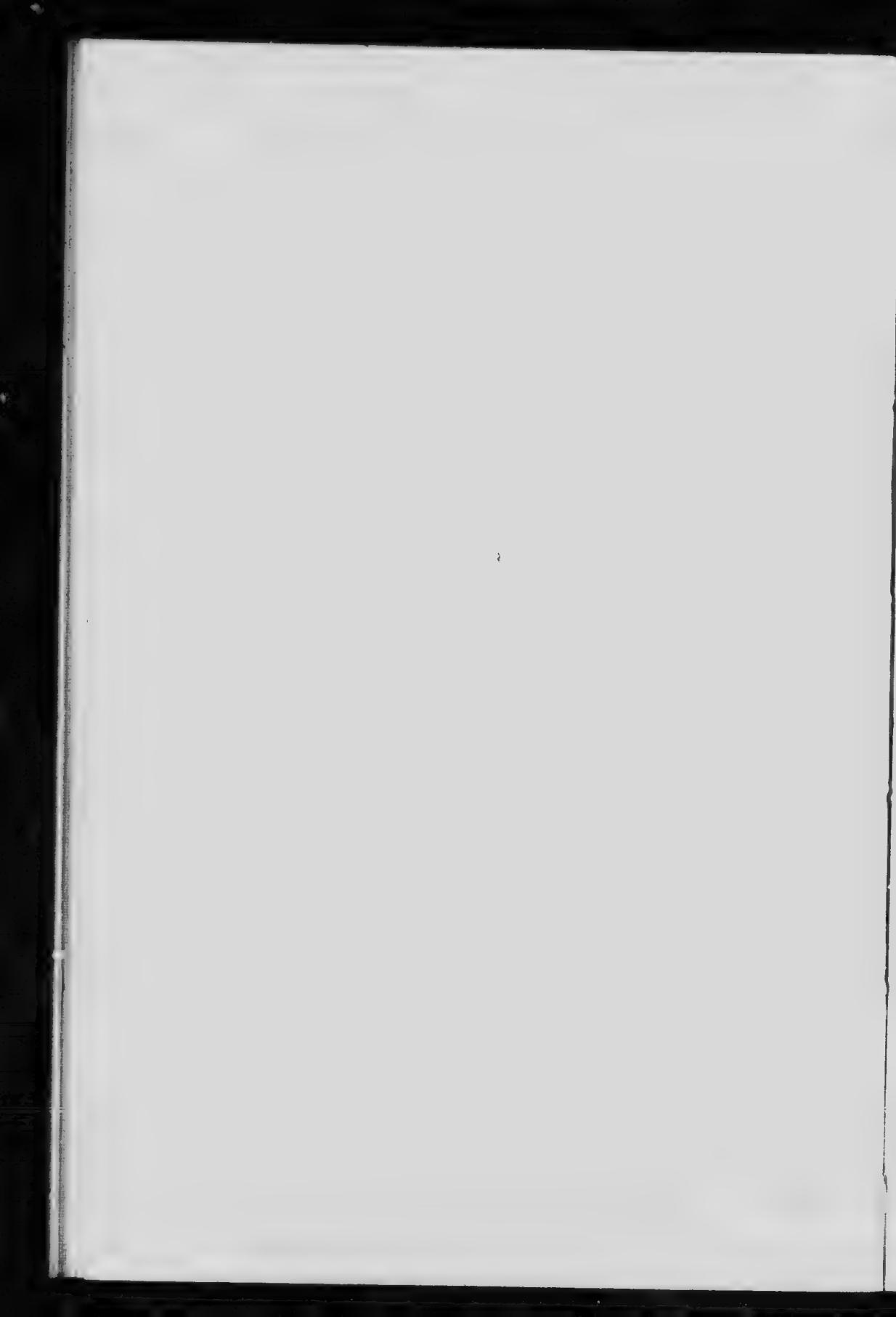
It is nearly three months now since I began

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to pet these pretty little birds. The better I become acquainted with them the more I love them. But if I should be asked to tell which of my pets is the most interesting, I should answer, "Why, Grandma Nuthatch, of course!" She, without a doubt, has amused me more than any of the others. What a tidy little housekeeper she is! The chicks are just the opposite, especially Ned, who is in the habit of splitting sunflower seeds on the rim of the food tray. This, of course, leaves the inside of the tray littered with husks. If it were not for Grandma throwing them out, the untidy little chicks would either have to learn to scratch, like old "Biddies" rearing a flock of chickens, or suffer the loss of some of their good, plump seed, which would surely get buried in the shells. Just here it occurs to me that this is a good reason why grannies should live with chickadees. A natural born tease, I cannot help getting a little innocent amusement from Grandma's odd traits by offering her on my hand a mixture of stuff, just for the fun of watching her sort it over and select the most edible bits, throwing away everything that she does not consider fit for food. Once I put a handful of nutshells in the food tray, just for the fun of seeing her throw them out.



Downey Boy, after eating some fat, posed to have his picture taken.



INCIDENTS

It is now the day after Christmas, December 26, 1918, and if I should live to be as old as the oldest man in the world, I shall not forget this date. My gentle little Nell died today. She flew against the corner frame of the Paradise glass feed house and fell lifeless in the snow. For some little time I had known that this little pet had lost the sight of one of her eyes, and I had seen her meet with two other accidents similar to the one that ended her life. In both these mishaps she fell to the ground stunned, but soon recovered. Her blindness, no doubt, was the cause of her being less talkative than her companions.

December 29—The worst that could possibly have happened to my occurred today! My tidy and beautiful little friend, Grandma, has just died. This morning she was very sick, and by noon she became unconscious. Very gently I smoothed down her badly ruffled feathers and placed her in a small open paper box, lined with cotton-wool, which thus supported her on all sides. There she died.

It was my intention when I began writing notes on my feathered pets, so interesting to me, to continue to write, more or less, during the whole winter, or as long as they remained

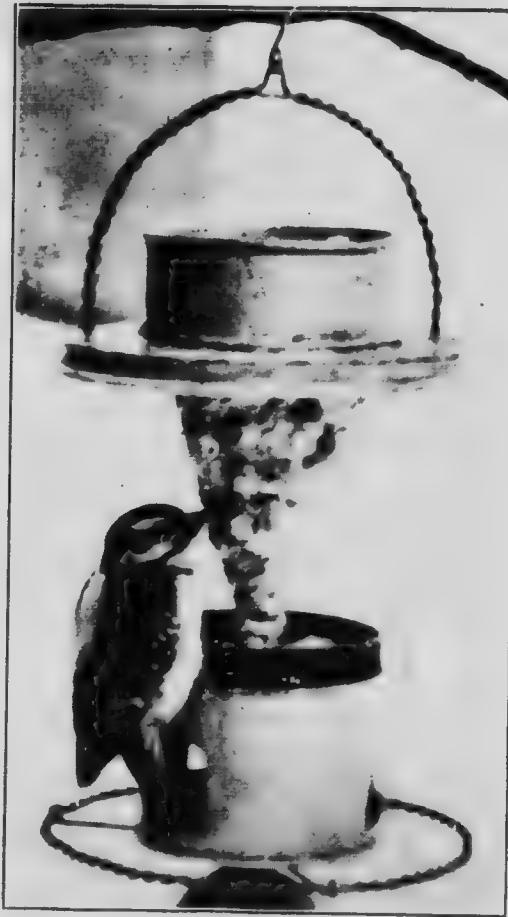
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with me. Never for one instant did I think I should be called upon to relate such a story of heart-breaking incidents as I am writing now. With a sincere hope that we, myself and all my human friends and readers who are kind to all the little wild birds, may never again have to experience such grievous losses, I here end my story.

AFTERTHOUGHTS

A short time after Grandma died I decided to try and take some photographs of the little friends who were still left. So I placed a camera in the Paradise, near the feeder tree, and there waited for the birds to come to me. I am glad to be able to show you how well I have succeeded, not only in taking the living, but my lost dead as well.

As I told you in "Incidents," my little pet, Grandma Nuthatch, was made as comfortable as possible in a small open paper box, lined with cotton wool, in which she died. It was pitiful to see her beautiful little mate who, after her death, would seldom come to me to be petted. One could hear him calling for his lost one, not only at home, but for hundreds of yards in the neighborhood. When I began to take pictures I thought of Grandma still occupying her soft resting place, and I decided to



Jim eating his breakfast of good fat (suet).



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show her to her mate. In order to do so, I fastened the little box to the trunk of the feeder tree, then waited for Grandpa to come to her, which I rejoice to say he did. The first time he came the little fellow lit about three feet above her, ran down the stem to within a foot of the box, then stopped perfectly still, coaxing in a soft, pleased little tone, "Nook-nook-nook." Lest he should become alarmed at her rather odd surroundings I snapped the shutter of the camera immediately. After surveying this strange but pleasing sight, he flew away, but by the time I had arranged the camera for another snap, Mr. Grandpa had returned, and lit about one foot above his dead mate. Then he ran down within three or four inches of her and there halted, coaxing again, "Nook-nook." Once again, while he was looking her over, I worked the shutter, and here are those two precious pictures.

LATER NOTES AND CONCLUSION

January 25—I have now seven chickadees to feed and pet. But Ned and Dee-de, as you know, are the only ones left of the family of four which came to me early last fall, and these two are my greatest pets. They are always found together, and will come to me anywhere they happen to see me. The other chicks are

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also very tame, and they will all fly to me if I should happen to be near their Paradise. I am very glad to be able to introduce Ned and Dee-de to you, as you can see from the frontispiece illustration. Ned is perched on my hand, desperately trying to wrest a sunflower seed from between my thumb and finger, while Dee-de can be seen on the rim of my hat searching for seeds. Note Ned's extra trimmings, which as I described them earlier in this story, you can see distinctly, are quite different from his sister's attire.

There are now four downey woodpeckers. Possibly the two late arrivals are brother and sister of Downey Boy and Downey Girl. They are also very tame and beautiful. I have taken several good photographs of the downies. The one here seen was taken a few days ago, when little Downey Boy lit on the feeder tree as I was standing beside it. I had removed the regular feeder and stood with a lump of fat in one hand and a string attached to the camera shutter in the other hand, waiting for a Downey to come. Here I must tell you that this was a brand new feeder for Master Downey to eat from as, ever since I moved the Paradise from the bee-yard to that by the house, he has been used to helping himself to fat in the new Paradise feeder. When he came he went first to the Brazil nuts, which



Jemima about to eat her breakfast. The fluffy Chickadee has probably had enough.



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were tacked to the trunk of the tree. Then I raised my hand and offered him a taste of the good fat. After sampling it he consented to hop on my thumb, and stood there eating and posing while I took his picture.

As I have hoped for a long time, Jim at last has brought his mate. Her name is Jemima. She, like Jim, is a magnificent big bird, but as you may easily see from her photograph, she does not wash her face before breakfast.

That is all, only here is the picture of a chickadee visiting the squirrels' feed house, which is situated on the opposite side of my dwelling from the birds' paradise.





A Chickadee visiting the Squirrel's feed house,
on the opposite side of the dwelling to
the Birds' Paradise.